

# THE SOMERSET HERALD.

AND FARMERS' AND MECHANICS' REGISTER.

TWO DOLLARS PER ANNUM,  
HALF-YEARLY IN ADVANCE.

IF NOT PAID WITHIN THE YEAR,  
\$2.50 WILL BE CHARGED.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY JONATHAN ROW, SOMERSET, SOMERSET COUNTY, PA.

New Series.]

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1846.

Vol. 4.—No. 45.

## THE DEATH BED.

We watched her breathing thro' the night,  
Her breathing soft and low,  
As in her breast the wave of life  
Kept heaving to and fro.  
So silently we seemed to speak,  
So slowly moved about,  
As we lent her half our powers,  
To eke her being out.  
Our very hopes belied our fears,  
Our fears our hopes belie;  
We thought her dying when she slept,  
And sleeping when she died.  
For when the morn came dim and sad,  
And chill with early showers,  
Her quiet eyelids closed,—she had  
Another morn than ours.

## THE BOMBARDMENT OF FORT BROWN.

BY AN OFFICER OF THE ARMY.

The various letters which have been written on the subject of the bombardment of Fort Brown seem to have been gotten up on the spur of the moment—written during the high excitement which prevailed amongst us, without regard to justice to officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers, and to the importance of such an event in our military history.

Having occupied a position to judge of the combined action of the garrison, and of observing all the various incidents of the bombardment, I take pleasure in furnishing a correct account of it, as I am not only anxious to do justice to all concerned, but am anxious that events which must bear an important place in our military history should be fully and correctly detailed to the public. And if I succeed in rescuing from oblivion any of those events which redound so much to the credit and honor of our regular army, I shall feel that I have at least contrived my mite towards re-establishing its worth in the estimation of those of our people who, from long continued peace, had almost forgotten it.

On the 25th of April, the day after the attack and capture of Thornton's squadron of 24 dragoons, we were first possessed of certain information that the enemy had crossed the Rio Grande in considerable force, and it was evident that he had in view one of two objects, either to advance on Point Isabel to cut off our supplies, or to attack Gen. Taylor in position; either of which rendered the completion of Fort Brown of immediate necessity, in order that it might be held by a small force, whilst the remainder of the army was free to move against the enemy leaving the United States flag still planted and protected on the left bank of the Rio Grande. The importance of this was well conceived by the commanding General, and its execution was but a portion of a plan of operations not less boldly conceived than successfully accomplished, and to which history shows no parallel. From this time to the 1st of May the forces were kept more constantly engaged on the work, laboring hard by day, whilst at night they were kept constantly on the alert in expectation of an attack.

On the 1st of May the Commanding General ordered the movement of his army, designating as the garrison of Fort Brown the seventh regiment of infantry, Captain Low's company of the second artillery, and Lieut. Bragg's battery of light artillery, composed of two six-pounders and two twelve-pounder howitzers.—The army moved at 3 o'clock P. M. on the 1st, and the garrison of Fort Brown marched in—two companies of the seventh infantry being assigned to every bastion except the one occupied by Capt. Low's company, which manned the eighteen-pounder battery of four guns, bearing on the town of Matamoros and the Mexican batteries. When the army marched it was confidently expected that the fort would not be attacked, but that Gen. Taylor would certainly have a fight either in going or returning from Point Isabel. The fort was now far from being finished, or in a proper state of defence—one curtain entirely unfinished, the drawbridge and interior defenses not yet commenced. Our commander saw before him an immense deal of labor to be expended on the work before it could be regarded in a proper state of defence, and that not a moment ought to be lost in its completion.

Immediately after the reveille on the 2d of May, the seventh infantry was turned out to work, and continued to labor hard during the whole day, and until long after dark, on the unfinished curtain and gateway, whilst the artillery companies were not less usefully employed in placing their batteries in a condition for offensive and defensive operations. At tattoo at night our gallant commander was on the alert, and fully impressed with the importance of his trust, ordered his command under arms, and saw every man at the post; he was to occupy in case of an attack, directing that every man should be instructed to be

ready to repair to his place at the parapet at a moment's warning. During the day muskets were placed in the hands of every man capable of bearing arms, and our force numbered five hundred and sixty men and forty officers; thirty-two officers and three hundred and forty-one rank and file seventh infantry; three officers and forty-two rank and file of Capt. Low's company; four officers and forty-one rank and file of Lieut. Bragg's company, six dragoons, and one officer and ninety-two rank and file of a detachment of inefficient men left from other regiments. Of this number, ninety-five were on the sick report, seventy-seven being of the number of inefficient men left from other regiments, and the remainder of the five hundred and sixty were citizens and sutlers, twenty-five in number. This was the strength of our force during the whole of the bombardment, and it has been truly said that "we were surrounded by as many thousands as we had hundreds."

Reveille on the memorable morning of the 3d found the gallant Brown at his post, and, whilst giving an order to his staff officer to have the seventh infantry turned out to work on the defenses, his attention was attracted to the first shot fired by the enemy. With a smile of joy he turned to his staff officer and said: "Sir, we have other work to do to-day; order the batteries manned; go to the right and see that every man is at his post, I will go to the left." Low's battery needed no order; it was already manned, and each piece directed by an officer. Capt. Mansfield, our engineer, having volunteered to aim the fourth piece. At this time it was observed that the flag had been overlooked and not yet raised, when Lieut. Van Dorn volunteered to raise it; which was done under the fire of the enemy, which was drawn upon him. The work commenced, and, notwithstanding the fear entertained that the axes of the old 18-pounders would not stand it, it was done, and well done.

The enemy's fire was opened on us from the nearest fort, called by us the "Sand-bag Battery," by the Mexicans "La Fortuna Redonda." This was composed of one eight-pounder and two mortars, under the command of Captain Passamante, a Frenchman, who, as he asserts, took up arms for his adopted country and for the protection of his family, but who bravely declined to follow the fortunes of General Arista when he ingloriously fled from Matamoros. To the skill of Captain Passamante as an artilleryman we can all bear witness, as a constant and well-directed fire was kept up from his battery until his eight-pounder was dismounted by us. The enemy's fire was commenced and continued with nine pieces of artillery—four mortars, the rest six and eight-pounder guns, throwing copper shot and shells. Bragg's battery was now playing upon them well; and in thirty minutes after our first fire "La Fortuna Redonda" was abandoned, the eight-pounder being dismounted, and the shells from Bragg's battery having made it rather warm work for them at the mortars. At this time Sergeant Weigart, of B company 7th infantry, was killed by a round shot. The enemy's was now continued from the batteries between La Fortuna Redonda and the lower fort, (called by the Mexicans La Fortuna de la Flecha,) from La Fortuna de la Flecha, and the mortar battery in its vicinity.—After silencing La Fortuna Redonda, our batteries continued a deliberate fire on the other batteries and the town until ten o'clock, when the enemy ceased firing to repair their batteries, the embrasures of which were well torn to pieces. We were compelled to cease our fire, in consequence of the necessity of using our ammunition as sparingly as possible, the fort having been left with only one hundred and fifty rounds of ammunition (canister, grape, and round shot) for each eighteen-pounder, and the six-pounder just as badly provided. Lieut. Bragg was now ordered to place his guns in barbette in the several bastions for defence one, under his own direction, placed in the bastion commanded by Captain Hawkins; one under Lieut. Thomas, in the bastion commanded by Major Sewell; one under the direction of Lieut. Reynolds, in the bastion of Captain Miles; and the other, under the direction of Lieut. Johnson, in the bastion commanded by Capt. Lee. In this condition we were surrounded, and without the means of preventing our enemy from placing his batteries almost wherever he pleased, and using against us his immense supply of ammunition to every advantage. The conduct of the officers and men of Captain Low's and Lieut. Bragg's companies during the cannonade with their batteries deserve high commendation, as they attracted the admiration of the whole command by the skillful management of their guns. From seven o'clock on the 1st the seventh infantry was kept constantly at work on the defenses, though the enemy's shells fell and exploded in all directions around them, every man lying down when a shell fell near, and immediately resuming the spade and pick after it had exploded. Officers were seen showing an example to their men, even in throwing dirt on the parapet. The enemy's fire recommenced in a very short

time, and was kept up at intervals until twelve o'clock at night; and when the men of the 7th infantry could no longer work from fatigue, they were ordered to stand to their arms at the parapet and kept on the alert all night. Notwithstanding the excessive fatigue of our men, from constant labor under the fire of the enemy (not being able even to hear the then delirious sound of our own guns) and from constant watching, they were in the highest spirits, only regretting our inability to return the enemy's fire. Captain Walker, sent from Captain May's command, came into the fort at three o'clock A. M. to bear intelligence from us to the Commanding General. Left us at four o'clock but returned at daybreak, having found that he was discovered by the enemy and his return before daylight impracticable.

On the morning of the 4th, at five o'clock, we were again saluted from the enemy's batteries, and the fire continued at intervals during the day. To-day our labor was continued under the fire of the enemy's mortars, and at night the unfinished curtain and gateway were nearly completed, but nightfall could afford no rest to our men; there were barriers to be removed on the outside which might afford protection to an approaching party of the enemy, and it was necessary to move them at night; for, if attempted during the day, our men would have been exposed to a galling fire of canister, grape, and round shot. As much of this work was done to-night as possible, but comparatively little, owing to the fatigue of the men, when they were permitted to get rest they could, with arms in hand at the parapet. This evening Capt. Walker left us to return, much fear being entertained for his safety, although he was not only confident of his safety, but expressed his determination to kill or capture one of the enemy's pickets on his return. At nine o'clock to-night, when we were all seeking a little repose from our labors, a random fire of Musketry was heard about three or four hundred yards off in our rear, and extending some distance up the river, the object being either to annoy us, or, by initiation of a fight, to draw out a small party. This fire was extremely annoying to us, as the balls, although spent, fell all around us, being thrown from a gun called by the Mexicans "escopettes." (A short gun, carrying a ball nearly as large as a grape shot,) and which, being elevated, threw the balls a considerable distance; this fire continued about an hour, but served to keep us on the alert all night.

On the morning of the 5th the enemy commenced the fire from his batteries at the usual hour, which we now expected a great deal more regularly than our breakfast. Our labor commenced again, and to-day the 7th infantry was employed in constructing bomb-proof shelters, which had become of the most urgent necessity from the great precision with which the enemy threw shells. This morning our commander determined to try some shells from one of the twelve-pounder howitzers on the mortar battery; but, being beyond the effective range, nothing was done to prevent the enemy's fire from being continued; however, we were even glad to hear the sound of our guns, and the exhilarating effects of it on our men was very perceptible. Immediately after our fire ceased the enemy became quite bold in our rear, presuming from the precision of their mortar firing and the perfect silence in the fort, that great execution had been done. Reconnitering parties of infantry and cavalry were seen all around us, some small parties approaching within two or three hundred yards of the fort. Lieut. Hanson, 7th infantry, with six dragoons, was sent out to look at them, who found the enemy in force and constructing a mortar battery on this side of the river, about six hundred yards distant, and a little west of north of us; to this work the reconnoitering parties retreated very precipitately; and Lieut. Hanson, having accomplished very gallantly the object for which he was sent out, returned, bringing us important information. To-day every man was kept hard at work—the artillery in erecting traverses to protect themselves at their guns, and the 7th infantry in constructing bomb-proof shelters, filling and making sand-bags; no man was idle; and at the time, when all the virtues of the American soldier were called into action, every man weighed in the balance, and results have proven that none were found wanting. Night brought us no respite but from the fire of the enemy's cannon, and of this even we were by no means certain. — were found necessary to be placed on the counter-scarp at the salients. Barriers had to be removed, and this must be done at night as quietly as possible. Captains Hawkins and Lee were sent out with their companies, covered by a party of skirmishers, commanded by Lieut. Humber, to clear away brush and other obstacles. This work continued until one A. M. when rest was found necessary for the men, and they returned to get what little they could with arms in hand at the parapet.

MAY 6TH.—At the usual hour this morning the enemy's fire opened on us from La Fortuna de la Flecha, the mortar batteries in its vicinity, and the one, yesterday established on this side of the river.

The enemy had now a cross fire on us and it was warmly kept up. No exertion had been spared to lessen our danger from it, as the almost exhausted energies of our men well attested. We well knew at this time that the enemy had a masked battery in the chaparral north of east from the fort and cross the river, from which much was to be dreaded; and not knowing how soon it would open on us, preparation had to be made for its reception.— This morning our eighteen-pounder threw some shot so directly into their embrasures, so as to let them know we had a little ammunition left; the compliment was directly returned by them; one of the six striking the trunnion cap of our eighteen-pounder, but did it no harm; and, being already loaded, it returned a shot directly into the embrasure from which it had just received one. At ten o'clock to-day we were deprived of the services of our gallant commander. His leg was shattered above the knee by a falling shell. I was near him when he fell, and never shall I forget his brave and manly bearing under the circumstances, when, being borne to the hospital, he turned to some of his men who had collected around him and said, "go to your work, men, I am but one among you." He lived until the ninth, when he died of his wound, deeply lamented by his regiment. He was a brave and gallant officer, and will long be remembered by his regiment as one of its brightest ornaments.

Captain Hawkins was now in command, and, fully impressed with the importance of his position, he was active and energetic in the exercise of his command, and was ably sustained by all his officers. The cannonade and bombardment was now kept up irregularly, and during the intervals of cessation small parties advanced, under cover of the ravine and old houses and bushes in our rear, firing escopettes, which annoyed us so much that it was found necessary to order Johnson and Bragg to give them a few rounds of grape and canister shot from the six-pounders. The escopettes were generally aimed at the sentinels and gunners on the look-out. Observing the force of the enemy now increasing around us, occupying the temporary entrenchments left by the army, it was thought that an assault might shortly be expected, and one of the eighteen-pounders, under the direction of Lieut. Lansing, was transferred from the southwest bastion (Capt. Low's) to the north-eastern bastion, (Maj. Maxwell's), which here protected the most probable points of attack. This gun was hardly in position before it was found necessary to fire one or two rounds of canister at the sharpshooters of the enemy, who endeavored to conceal themselves in the chaparral bushes, near the old dragoon encampment; this firing of the eighteen and six-pounders drove the sharpshooters off. Large parties of mounted men and infantry were now seen at a distance all around us. The cannonade and bombardment was continued, allowing us now and then a respite of some 15 or 20 minutes. Bragg, Thomas, Johnson, and Lansing were ordered to fire a charge of canister or grape at the enemy, whenever an opportunity offered to do execution. At 4 o'clock a white flag was shown at the old buildings in rear, and, well knowing its purport, every man took advantage of this opportunity to put himself and his arms in order for warmer work; the charges were drawn, fresh ones put in, and all were delighted at the approaching crisis, which was then supposed to be near at hand. Two Mexican officers advanced, and by direction of Captain Hawkins were met by Maj. Sewell and Lieut. Britton, who brought him a communication signed by General Arista, demanding a surrender of the forces under his command, giving him one hour to reply. A council of war was held and a very appropriate reply unanimously agreed upon, and sent off in the allotted time. It was now understood by all of our men that the crisis was rapidly approaching, and every man took the favorable opportunity of the cessation of firing to put his arms in first-rate order; at this all went to work cheerfully, and seemed glad that they were at length to have an opportunity of meeting the enemy hand to hand. The day had been excessively hot, and, laboring continually, the men were almost constantly exposed in the burning sun. The night came and found us prepared for any emergency; preparations had been made to hold one part of the fort if driven from the other, and even to barricade a bastion if so tightly pressed; all the means of barricading (wagon bodies, axles and wheels) were collected at those points where it was thought necessary, and every preparation was made to hold out to the last extremity. The night passed off very quietly, but we were constantly on the alert, almost certain of an attack the next morning.

On the 7th instant, at 5 o'clock A. M., the enemy's batteries opened on us, and their shells were thrown with great accuracy for about an hour, when there was a cessation; we were now much disappointed, as we had hoped that, having demanded a surrender, the enemy was at least prepared to assault us, as we had become exceedingly tired of remaining passive under so heavy a bombardment.—

At 7 o'clock small parties of the enemy were seen in our rear, occupying the old houses on the road and the old guard-house of the 2d brigade. Bragg, Johnson, and Lansing each gave them a round of canister and grape, which caused them to disperse. We were now compelled to be very particular in the use of our ammunition for cannon, as the supply was becoming very limited, whilst the supplies of the enemy seemed inexhaustible, as they now commenced throwing iron shells for the first time. It was supposed, from the firing, that one of the mortars had been removed from our rear, and we had every reason to expect it in a very short time from another direction, as the enemy commanded far more preferable positions for batteries than they had yet selected. The bombardment was continued at intervals at the pleasure of the enemy, taking time to procure the ammunition from town and to cool their guns. We lost several horses to-day, and one of the wheels of a caisson of Bragg's battery was disabled. Our bomb-proofs were now pretty far advanced, and served to protect our men from the sun whilst engaged in making sand-bags, and the relieving parties for labor. Again, at 2 o'clock P. M., we were annoyed by the fire of escopettes, from the bank of the river and ravine, so distant, however, as to be harmless. This cowardly action on the part of the enemy served but to incense our men, and many of them applied to be permitted to pick them off with rifles in case they showed themselves. It was about this time a Mexican officer was observed frequently to take a position in a tall tree, on the other side of the river, to examine into the effect and range of their shells; from his position he could observe the manœuvres of the piece directed by Bragg in person, and was once or twice driven very precipitately from his position by pointing his rifle at him. The bombardment was continued without intermission until sunset, and more than two-thirds of the shells took effect in the fort. All the instruments of the 7th infantry band were lost to-day by the explosion of a bomb-shell; and Private Moody, of H company, 7th infantry, lost his arm. It was now considered necessary to remove the traverse thrown up by Gen. Worth's command before the fort was commenced, and about nine o'clock Capt. Miles, in command, with Lieut. Van Dorn and Clitz, with eighty men, were sent out to level it, with orders to use the utmost precaution, and to work as silently as possible, in order not to draw the enemy's fire. This dangerous operation was accomplished with astonishing rapidity, and it must have astonished the enemy the next morning to find that it had been done without their notice. This party was covered by a detachment of light infantry, commanded by Lieut. Potter, who performed his duty with great credit to himself, throwing his party up and down the river.— The guard was regularly detailed from the 7th infantry, and on the non-commissioned officers and men of the 7th infantry devolved the picket-guard duty, at this time the most dangerous and arduous duty to be performed. On this duty Sergeant Wrapp, Corporal Mason, privates Ballard and Melton distinguished themselves by their daring bravery in approaching the enemy's lines, Corporal Manson and privates Ballard and Melton were always volunteers when there was dangerous service for a picket, and invariably performed the duty most gallantly. About 11 o'clock Sergeant Wrapp, by the fire of one of the enemy's pickets, received a ball in his eye without injury to himself, and retreated with his picket, having returned the fire. A short time afterwards a body of the enemy advanced to within about three hundred yards of the fort, and commenced firing their escopettes at random, sometimes in volleys, each volley preceded by several blasts on bugles. The exact purport of this we could not understand, though it kept us on the alert all night, with little or no rest to officers and men. This firing was continued until near daylight, the time when we expected the enemy's columns to advance to attack us.

ON THE 8th INSTANT, AT DAYLIGHT.— This morning there was no evidence of the advance of the enemy, and at 5 A. M. the batteries opened on us again from La Fortuna de la Flecha, La Fortuna Redonda, and the battery in our rear with shells, and the bombardment was continued without cessation during the morning. During the heavy bombardment, at the suggestion of Capt. Mansfield, a picket was sent out to burn the old house near the traverse thrown down the night before. This was done by Corporal Manson and private Ballard, who volunteered to perform the service; and, as soon as they were observed, drew the fire of the enemy with round shot and shells. The firing was continued during the day at intervals. The flag-staff, being some distance outside of the fort, and exposed to the fire of the enemy, the commanding officer caused a staff to be erected inside the fort, and the national flag of the 7th infantry was raised. This was done by a party under Lieut. Hanson; and, in erecting the staff, Quartermaster Sergeant Henry, necessarily exposed, performed

his duty very gallantly. A new mortar battery now opened on us from the chaparral ridge immediately west of Fort Brown, from which shells were thrown with astonishing accuracy—five out of seven successive shells bursting in the bastion commanded by Capt. Lee, and in which Johnson had his six-pounder. At 2 o'clock we heard the Palo Alto cannonading coming to us in sounds that could not be mistaken, and lasted until 7 o'clock. During this time the bombardment and cannonading was kept up on us continually, and the excitement in our command cannot be described. A short time before sunset a column of infantry was seen advancing on the road to the Palo Alto, having crossed at the upper ferry, and a large body of cavalry, which had crossed below, advanced in the same direction.— These columns reinforced Gen. Arista. We now well knew that the attention of the main body of the army was diverted from us; and several officers expressed to me a desire to volunteer to storm the batteries, had it been deemed expedient by the captain commanding. The night was passed quietly.

9TH INSTANT.—This morning the batteries opened on us again—the mortar on this side of the river having been removed to a position between Fort Paroles and the chaparral ridge west of us, which fired accurately though much further off. This morning the captain commanding determined to have the flag raised on the staff on the outside of the fort, and, the halliards being unrigged, the topmast had to be lowered to replace them. Lieut. Hanson, with Quartermaster Sergeant Henry, and privates Collins and Howard, were sent out to perform this duty. It could not be done without great labor and exposure to the fire from the enemy's batteries, which was immediately directed upon them— notwithstanding, Quartermaster Sergeant Henry and privates Collins and Howard stood on the cross-trees at least twenty minutes, during the time exposed to a constant fire of canister, grape, and round shot. They found it impossible to raise the topmast, but fastened it in position, and raised the national flag to the admiration of the whole command. At the suggestion of Capt. Mansfield the commanding officer ordered a party of rear, which had been occupied by the enemy. Sergeant Jones, of C company, 7th infantry was sent out with ten men to perform this service—private Ballard again a volunteer to burn the houses. Capt. Mansfield accompanied this party, and each house was burnt successively, under the fire of the enemy's batteries. Lieut. Gantt, with a party of twenty men armed, and with axes, was sent out to cut away bushes and obstacles on the ground between the dragoon encampment and the fort. This party drew and stood the fire of the enemy until recalled by the commanding officer, bringing in with them old barrels for use in the fort. Shortly after 2 o'clock P. M. we heard the re-engagement of the armies, which caused the most pleasant excitement in our command, as we could distinctly perceive the advance of our artillery and musketry.— Our operations, however, still went on.— This afternoon Lieut. McLaws was sent out with a party to cut away the chaparral bushes, drawing the fire of the enemy, but working without any regard whatever to their imminent danger. The efforts of the enemy at their batteries seemed now to be redoubled, and the bombardment and cannonading were at this time heavier than we had yet sustained, and was kept up constantly until some time after we had heard of the total rout of the enemy at Resaca de la Palma. At 5 o'clock we saw the Mexican cavalry and infantry in precipitate retreat to the river, but entirely out of the range of the six-pound guns, notwithstanding some few shots were fired from a six and eighteen-pounder. The latter had scarcely fired once before we perceived the danger of killing our own men, when the firing ceased on both sides of the river. Our delight on hearing the result of the battle of the 9th is indescribable. Having been harassed for seven successive days without rest, and performing constant labor during the time, without the excitement of meeting the enemy hand to hand, our energies were nearly exhausted, and we needed only rest and an opportunity to avenge ourselves. The conduct of officers and men, sent out on detached parties, exposed to constant cannonading from the enemy, deserves the highest commendation for their gallantry; and the cool and deliberate manner in which they labored without the excitement of a battle cannot be too highly praised. The distinguished services of Quartermaster Sergeant Henry, Corporal Manson, and private Ballard deserve the highest praise.

P.

"Jamie, why do you not be after getting your life insured?"  
"Ah, why should I, my honey?"  
"Ah, indeed, that after you are dead and gone you may be sure of a comfortable subsistence to yourself and family."  
"Take your time," as the man said when he returned a borrowed watch.